First Peoples, Third World Health

Why is the health of Indigenous Australians the worst in the Developed World?

At a time of record national prosperity the health and well-being of Indigenous Australians is in crisis, slipping further behind that of other Australians.

Health care need is eight times greater for Indigenous than other Australians, and significantly worsening.

Australian Indigenous life expectancy is 20 years below the national average. Similar countries like Canada, New Zealand and the US have closed this gap to just 3-7 years since 1970. Why not in Australia?

Key education, employment and income indices are worsening relative to other Australians. There remains a 20-year backlog in provision of Indigenous housing. Substance abuse and violence continue to wreak havoc.

Countless inquiries and reports on these issues have not resulted in action.

Reconciliation, too, is in crisis. A recent Parliamentary Inquiry into national progress on Reconciliation reveals an absence of Government leadership and positive action. Its policies deflect Indigenous aspirations for formal recognition of our rights and place within the nation.

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research recently confirmed that "practical reconciliation" policies have made no significant impact on Indigenous disadvantage relative to the rest of the population.

A better future for Indigenous people requires access to health, education, housing and employment opportunities on a par with other Australians.

Achieving this requires consultative approaches that empower Indigenous communities to determine and control solutions.

It requires our unique cultures and identities to be acknowledged and respected.

Thankfully, positive leadership continues to be shown by local communities and the people's movement for Reconciliation.

It is time to harness this to a revitalisation of national action addressing the unresolved issues of Reconciliation, recommended by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation – ANTaR - in partnership with Indigenous peoples, is leading this process.

Our first priority is Indigenous health, tackling underlying causes, rather than just symptoms.

Health is a human right that is directly linked to other fundamental human rights: housing and employment, our relationships to land, our rights to self-determination and the enjoyment and protection of our cultures.

Many Australians are unaware that these human rights are denied to many Indigenous Australians, or that such neglect has serious psychological, social and economic implications for the nation as a whole.

Indigenous people take great heart from Australians like those involved in ANTaR who are taking responsibility for action and speaking out for decency and respect for all.

We do not walk alone on the long road ahead. With your support and that of ANTaR we will make real progress.

One of the best ways you can ensure that this vital work takes place is by supporting ANTaR.

You can find out more about ANTaR's work at www.antar.org.au. You can become a donor to ANTaR using the slip below.

This is a collective letter by the Indigenous Reference Group that advises ANTaR, listed top right.



From top left to right:

Patrick Dodson Chair, Lingiari Foundation

Prof. Larissa Behrendt Professor of Law, UTS Sydney

Sen. Aden Ridgeway Senator for NSW

Dr. Bill Jonas Indig. Social Justice Commissioner, HREOC **Linda Burney** MP NSW Legislative Assembly

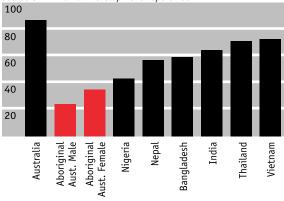
Olga Havnen Indigenous Prog. Mgr. Fred Hollows Foundation **Lester Irabinna Rigney** Yunggorendi First Nations Centre, Flinders University

Prof. Marcia Langton Professor of Australian Indigenous Studies, Melbourne University

Prof. Mick Dodson AM Prof. of Indigenous Studies, ANU **Prof. Lowitja O'Donoghue** AC CBE

Peter Yu former Executive Director, Kimberley Land Council David Ross CEO, Central Land Council (no photo shown)

% of Population Expected to Live to Age 65 Source UNDP Human Development Report 2002







▶ Please post to: ANTaR PO Box 1176 Rozelle NSW 2039

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